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UNCLAS YEREVAN 002374

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/CACEN, DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION RALLY DRAWS ONLY LUKEWARM  
RESPONSE

1. (U) Sensitive But Unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

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SMALL RALLY, NO EXCITEMENT  
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2. (SBU) Roughly 1500 opposition supporters gathered October 26 in Opera Square for an authorized rally timed to coincide with commemorative events surrounding the anniversary of the October 27, 1999 parliamentary murders. Although rally organizers had significantly improved some of their logistical arrangements since their spring rallies (i.e., had a sound system that actually worked, had two dozen young supporters in matching T-shirts and banners all with the same "no more terrorism" message), they failed to generate any excitement in the crowd, which consisted largely of middle-aged men and a handful of sunflower seed vendors.

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EVEN SMALLER MARCH TO LAY FLOWERS UNEVENTFUL  
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3. (SBU) Following some dozen speeches linking the 1999 parliamentary killings to more recent terrorist acts in Moscow (the 2002 Nord-Ost hostage taking) and Beslan, approximately 300-500 opposition supporters marched from Opera Square to the National Assembly (located across the street from the U.S. Embassy) to lay a wreath and flowers in memory of the "October 27" victims. Although the march was officially unauthorized, the police did not interfere and the march proceeded without incident. National Assembly Speaker Artur Baghdasarian and his Deputy Speakers met the senior members of the delegation at the gate and escorted about 30 opposition leaders and victims' family members to the memorial on the National Assembly grounds. The remainder of the marchers placed their flowers along the fence surrounding the National Assembly grounds and dispersed without incident.

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COMMENT: OPPOSITION FINDING NO TRACTION  
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4. (SBU) The authorities displayed restraint and did not interfere with the small, unauthorized march. The governing coalition's decision to have National Assembly leaders cooperate with and participate in the opposition's wreath-laying (with wide television coverage) underscored the possibility for future cooperation. With such minimal public support, the opposition may well follow through on some of its hints that it might suspend the parliamentary boycott and get back into the process of reforming Armenia's constitution (on the National Assembly's agenda this winter).  
EVANS